

Walkers are Welcome - Report to HTC Meeting 2nd April 2020

Walkers are Welcome Henley (WaW) is part of a nationwide initiative to encourage towns and villages to be 'welcoming to walkers'. We aim to strengthen Henley's reputation as a place for visitors to come and enjoy the outdoors. This should benefit the town's businesses; walkers in the English countryside spend around £6 billion a year, generating more than £2 billion in income and supporting up to 245,000 full-time jobs.

Henley is an ideal place for walking with two long-distance paths, the Thames Path national trail and the Oxfordshire Way which pass through the town. It is on the edge of the Chilterns, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) and the hub of a rich network of well-marked paths. We have a host of cafés, hotels, pubs and B&Bs.

Commercial organisations in the town such as cafes, pubs, restaurants, hotels, B&Bs and sports shops which support the organisation and pay a small annual subscription will be eligible to display "Walkers are Welcome" stickers. Commercial members will be expected to comply with minimum conditions eg B&Bs and accommodation providers should have facilities for drying clothes and footwear and cafes and eateries should provide covers for muddy boots.

WaW Henley was set up in 2018 and since then we have been carrying out a number of projects to enhance walking and promote the town to a wider public. The principal one was the running of a Henley Walking Festival in October 2019; we ran this in conjunction with the Chiltern Walking Festival and it was a reasonable success considering the appalling weather we experienced over the week-end ! The Festival was to have been repeated in May this year but has had to be cancelled as a result of Corona Virus.

We are talking with various bodies about the putting up of a sign to mark the start / finish point of The Oxfordshire Way which runs from Henley to Bourton-on-the-Water.

We are planning to organise a charity walk in conjunction with BBC Country File in aid of Children in Need in the autumn.

We are grateful to Henley Town Council for the grant given to us which has enabled us to perform our activities.

Peter C Stone
Chair WaW Henley

March 2020 Updated